RARE AREA

Lighting Projection Collage created by Jeffrey Hunt
George Coates Performance Works 1985-86

This image is a reproduction of a lighting projection collage from *Rare Area*, a groundbreaking production by George Coates Performance Works. What you're seeing is not the artwork itself, but a visual artifact — both a scan of the original 35mm collage slide and a close AI-assisted recreation. The actual artwork existed only in performance: created in real time, on stage, in front of a live audience. These reproductions document a part of that process, but the art itself was inherently ephemeral, unfolding through light, movement, and presence.

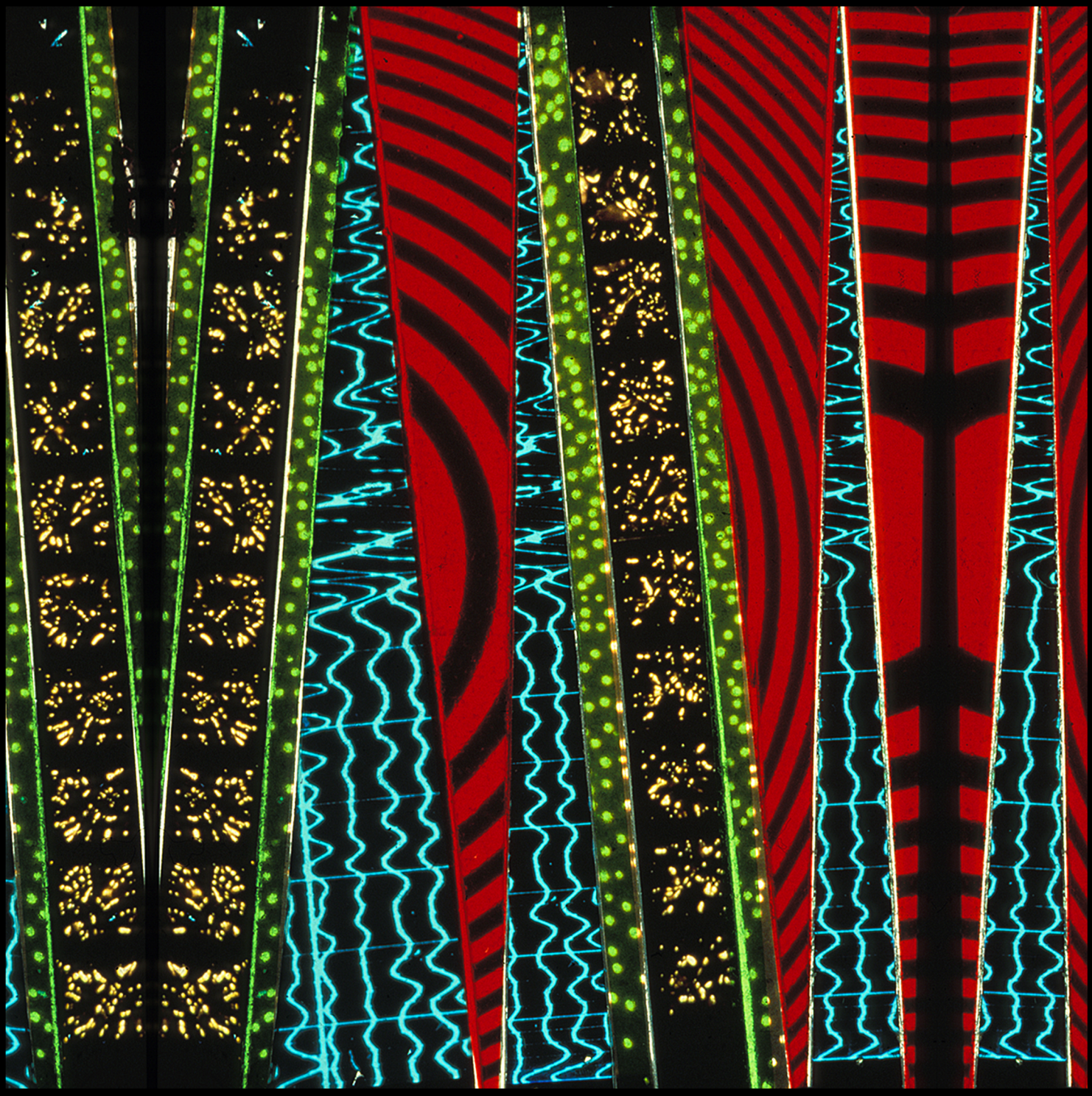
The original collage was constructed, in part, from fragments of 35mm slides — outtakes and unused images originally designed by Jerome Sirlin for scenic projection. I repurposed these discarded elements, layering them with colored gel to create new compositions. In performance, this specific image, in variation, was projected from multiple projectors during a sequence near the end of the show, when performers moved gently across the stage, waving translucent flags.

The design explored additive color mixing using near-primary colors of projected light. As the actors moved through overlapping projections, the imagery blended in real time, producing secondary hues and a flickering sense of visual scintillation — a kind of ephemeral stage animation created by moving physical objects through static light. Notably, these projections appeared only on three-dimensional objects — never on flat scenery or backdrops — a true bit of theatrical magic.

The original collage measured approximately 40mm x 40mm, yet it was projected at a scale of up to 40 feet across the stage. Very narrow working bands of light near stage center, combined with complex analysis of projector throws and lenses, made this a precise and demanding visual trick — a sleight of hand that exemplifies the transitory, transformative power of live performance.

This image is one of several carefully preserved artifacts from *Rare Area*, which premiered at the Kaai Theater Festival in Brussels and toured to Kortrijk and Antwerp, Belgium. The production also ran for several months at Theatre Artaud in San Francisco, was featured at the Herbst Theatre, and was included in the 50th Anniversary celebration at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. It received both the San Francisco Chronicle's Bernie Award (1985) and the Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award (1986).

While similar projection techniques had been explored by artists such as Alvin Ailey and Laurie Anderson, our work with George Coates Performance Works expanded the medium by treating light and motion not merely as visual effects, but as integral elements of the action itself. Animation was not projected; it was created live by moving physical objects through static imagery — a choreography of light, surface, movement, and, of course, music — that existed only in the moment.



George Coates Performance Works

RARE AREA

Sponsored by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
Herbst Theater, Dec. 26--Jan. 24

Director **George Coates**
Music **Marc Ream**
Set Design **Jerome Sirlin**

Performed by:
White Eagle, Tenor
Kathryn Neale, Soprano
Hitomi Ikuma, Mime
Sean Kilcoyne, Actor

Instrumentalists:
Chris Halaby, Guitar
Barbara Imhoff, Harp
Larry Schneider, Sax
Jarrell Irvin, Keyboard
Eric Muhler, Kurzweil

Lighting Projection Design **Jeff Hunt**
Scenic Projections **Jerome Sirlin**
Overhead Lighting Design & Technical Direction **Larry Neff**
Costume Design **Cynthia DuVal**
Assistant Director **Sean Kilcoyne**
Film Projection Design **Karen Rice**
Audio Services **Petrasounds Studio**
Infill Slides **William Farley**
Infill Slide Computer Enhancement **Stephanie Slade/ Paint Box Plus of Hollywood**

Production Stage Manager: **Jeffrey Wilk**
Sound Engineer: **Mike Hersh**
Sound Equipment: **Paul Carlsen**
Projections Operators: **Karen Rice, Jeff Hunt**
Lighting Operator: **Julian Neff**
Backstage: **Jeff Atkisson**

Public Relations/Marketing: **David Hyry & Associates**
Producer: **Edward Sisson**

Cover photo: Charles Rose ***Interior photos: Phillip Kaake, Charles Rose***

RARE AREA Performance History
Created January through April, 1985
World Premiere: Kaai Festival Belgium, May 2--8 1985
(Brussels, Kortrijk, Antwerp)
American Premiere: Zellerbach Hall, June 19-30
Royce Hall, October 19
Marin Civic Auditorium, October 25
Theater Artaud, San Francisco, Nov. 15--Feb. 5, 1986
SF Museum of Modern Art (Herbst Theater) February 21-22
Doolittle Theater, Los Angeles, August 2-24
SF Museum of Modern Art (Herbst Theater) Dec. 26--Jan. 24, 1987
January 7, 1987, marks the 100th performance of **RARE AREA**

George Coates Performance Works (GCPW) is a non-profit arts ensemble composed of performers, artists, and craftspeople from a wide variety of arts disciplines working with director George Coates to generate original live art. Each production evolves out of a four to six month workshop/rehearsal period of interactions amoung the participating artists. Former members of the ensemble have included Leonard Pitt, John Duykers, Emily Rawlins, Ellen Sebastian, Margaret Fisher, Stoney Burke, Katya Roemer, Rinde Eckert, Melissa Weaver, and Paul Dresher.

Works created include *2019 Blake* (1977); *Duykers the First* (1979); *The Way of How* (1981); *are/are* (1983); *Seehear* (1984); *Meantime* (1985); *Rare Area* (1985); and *Post-Modern Moms* (1986). GCPW has also created works commissioned for special events, including *hoi polloi* (1984) for the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art 50th Anniversary, *The Doing Knot* (1985) for the Banff Arts Centre Canada, and *Edifice Next* (1986) for the opening of the new Intersection Arts Building, San Francisco.

GCPW has appeared at the Brooklyn Academy of Music/Next Wave Festival; Philadelphia's American Music Theater Festival; Milwaukee's Walker Art Center; the Washington DC Performing Arts Society; Seattle's Cornish Institute; UCLA, UC Irvine, San Diego, Santa Cruz, & Davis; and Baltimore's New Theater Festival. In Europe, GCPW has appeared at festivals and theaters in London, Munich, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, Bordeaux, Brussels, Kortrijk, Antwerp, Lille, Freiburg, Granada, and Wroclaw.

In San Francisco, GCPW has performed regularly at Herbst Theater and Theater Artaud, and has also performed at the New Performance Gallery, the old Eureka Theater, and at Intersection. In the Bay Area, the company has appeared at the Marin Civic, Zellerbach HIall, Julia Morgan, and the Henry J. Kaiser Auditorium (1982 International Sculpture Conference).

1986-87 is GCPW's tenth season making live art. To celebrate this anniversary, alongside the creative team, a group of contributing producers is also forming to help raise production funds for the company's 1987 premiere, *The Actualists*. More information can be obtained by calling 528-8411.